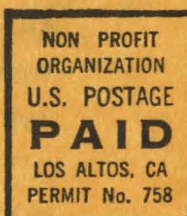


The K.J.A. Bulletin

TEVET 5746
JAN. 86



K.J.A.
P.O. BOX 4235
MTN VIEW, CA. 94040



TO:

David Ovadia



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President's Message

Dear friend,

As we approach the end of 1985, it is my pleasure to wish you a very happy new year 1986 hoping that it will be a better and prosperous year.

At this time, we are in the process of preparing for the election of the new board of directors to be installed sometime at the beginning of the year 1986. Our community needs energetic members who can with their capacities and new ideas, help our community to advance and take the right place among other communities.

In the very near future you will have a chance to apply for candidacy to be a member; with this in mind I urge you to take serious consideration in becoming a candidate. We need your help and support. The Board of Directors meets once every month and I personally welcome anyone to attend any of these meetings as a visitor to listen to our discussions and make any remarks or give ideas that will be considered when making decisions.

Needless to say that we hope to receive your financial support, without it we will not be able to reach our goals. So give as much as you can, and like someone said it is better to give than to receive.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL

Jacob Masliah
President

=====

Selected topics from the KJA BOARD MEETINGS:

- JACOB PESSAH gave a verbal report on his trip to ISRAEL. He was requested to follow up with a written report. JACOB PESSAH returned \$450.00 from the \$1000.00 advanced to him by KJA towards his trip.

- JOE PESSAH gave the board a briefing on his trip to ISRAEL. Joe was very impressed with Rab El Gamil who is currently in a one year sabbatical leave from his work. Joe would like to see KJA sponsor Mr. El Gamil's visit to the U.S. for educational purposes.

- ELIE MOUSSA reported to the board that we have collected \$92,035.27 as of 11-18-85, which is the total figure from all funds.

- EMIL KHEDER gave to the board an account of his efforts during a recent land auction where KJA was outbid in trying to

Selected topics from the KJA BOARD MEETINGS: (continued)

obtain a land in San Carlos.

- JOE PESSAH presented to the board his plan to initiate raffle tickets to everyone receiving the bulletin towards winning air travel tickets. If there is anyone who would like to receive the bulletin under their own name, now is an excellent time to send your name and address to KJA.

- The KJA received a request from our community in ISRAEL asking us to write a letter to President Perez soliciting his help in removing road blocks towards giving Rabbinical status to the Karaite jews in ISRAEL.

- The annual KJA PURIM party preliminary agenda was approved and it was set around the 23rd of February. Two board members, JOE ABEL and JOE OVADIA and three non members, DAVID OVADIA, YOMTOV HEFEZ and REMY PESSAH will start working on the details. If anyone knows of a social hall big enough for up to 200 persons that could be available, please contact one of the persons named above.

=====

M A Z A L T O V

RAHEL and JOE OVADIA on the birth of their son, NATAN JOEL OVADIA, born October 15th, 1985, California.

KIM and HENRI PESSAH on the birth of their son, GABRIEL PARKE PESSAH, born August 1st, 1985, California.

MARY and AMIN PESSAH on the birth of their son, MICHAEL JOSEPH PESSAH, born July 19th, 1985, California.

JEAN and ALBERT MASSUDA on the birth of their son, JOEL MAURICE MASSUDA, born May 7th, 1985, California.

SHEILA and KENT SUTHERLAND on the birth of their daughter, SABRINA LOREE SUTHERLAND, born September 24th, 1985, California.

ESTHER and FRED OVADIA on the birth of their son, BAROUKH FRED OVADIA, born in August, 1985, California.

FARIDA and MOUSSA LICHAA on the birth of their daughter, MONA LICHAA, born July 2nd, 1985, Maryland.

DIANE and MIKE HOLLANDER on the birth of their son JONATHAN DAVID HOLLANDER, born October 30th, 1985, California.

RACHELINE and NESSIM AYUN on the birth of their daughter CATRINA ESTHER AYUN, born April 24th, 1985, California.

ODETTE and DAVID KHEDER on the birth of their daughter JENNIFER JOY KHEDER, born November 29th, 1985, California.

Z E K H E R

The names below were remembered during our monthly saturday or special prayer. KJA thanks everyone who contributed in their beloved memory.

LILIAN EL TAHAN BAT SHALOM PESSAH
ALAIN BEN YEHOUDA HA COHEN
LEON BEN MOUSSA DARWISH HA LEVY
DAVID BEN ABRAHAM EL GAMIL
SULTANA SAAD EL DABBAH
AZIZA BAT RAHMIN ZAKARIA HA LEVY
RACHEL MASSOUDA
DR. FARID MASSOUDA
MOSHE BEN ABRAHAM ABDEL WAHED
and his wife MARIAM
VITA FARAG MASLIAH
MOUSSA FARAG MASLIAH
DR. ELIE BAROUKH LICHAA
MASSAD BAT MASSUDA
ESTHER ELIAHOU NOUNOU
MOSHE BEN OVADIA
SHLOMO MOSHE PESSAH
LEONIE JACOB
ESTHER SINANI
YOUSSEF LIETO MOURAD
REGINA and YOUSSEF MESHMESH
FORTUNEE MOURAD MOUSSA
ISHAK LICHAA
JACQUES LIETO SHABETAI MANGOUBI
SALWA DABBAH
MOUSSA DARWISH
ESTHER ABDEL WAHED
FARAG ASLAN COHEN
TEWFIK YOUSSEF LICHAA
MOUSSA EZIEL
ESTHER MOURAD
SHABITAI MASLIAH & ZOGATO FORTUNEE
ABRAMINO MASLIAH
ELIE YOUSSEF MARZOUK
REGINA LICHAA
YOUSSEF TAHAN
FORTUNEE DAUD FARAG LICHAA
ESTHER DAUD
YACOB ELIAHOU ELGAZZAR
ELIE VITA AL TAWIL
VITA YACOB EL GAMIL
RAHEL COHEN
OVADIA SHABTAI DARWISH
FORTUNEE SHABTAI DARWISH
ELEN & SARAH ABRAHAM MARZOUK
YESHOVA BEN OVADIA
HOSNI LIETO MOURAD
ABDOU OVADIA

DR. BARAKAT MASSUDA
LOUNA BAT BAROUKH COHEN
YOUSSEF MARZOUK
RAHMIN ZAKARIA HA LEVY
ZAKARIA RAHMIN ZAKARIA HA LEVY
ABRAHAM OVADIA
YAFET ABRAHAM OVADIA
FLORE SALEH
GRACIA FARAG NOUNA
FARAG YOUSSEF MASLIAH
YOUSSEF FARAG MASLIAH
ZAKI BAROUKH LICHAA
BAROUKH LICHAA
LIETO YOUSSEF EL KODSI
LEONIE YACOB KHEDR
ISHAK BEN OVADIA
ELIAHOU YOUSSEF MARZOUK
DR. SELIM IBRAHIM
MOUSSA MASSUDA
YOUSSEF and MATHILDA LICHAA
REGINA YAQUB SHAMON
ZAKI LICHAA
YOUSSEF ZAKI LICHAA
FOUAD SHALOM DABBAH
RACHEL DARWISH
IBRAHIM ABDEL WAHED
SETTOUT COHEN
NAZLI ASLAN COHEN
NADINE COHEN
MOURAD MOUSSA MOURAD
YEHOUDA ABDEL WAHED
HAFEZ TAHAN
AZIZA ASLAN COHEN
HABIB BAROUKH MASSUDA
RAHEL YACOB
KAHIL ABRAHAM
BAROUKH IBRAHIM SIAHOU
TEWFIK & RACHEL ELGAZZAR
SARINA BAT AMIN MENASHE
RACHEL SHIMON LICHAA
PAULA TAHAN
MARY ABRAHAM DARWISH
YOUSSEF ABRAHAM DARWISH
LIETO ABRAHAM MARZOUK
FARAG VITA HAINA
OVADIA and FORTUNEE OVADIA
YOUSSEF MOUSSA EL SERGANI
SOLTANA TAHAN

subject
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As in c

We are now accepting advertising to help pay the cost of publication of the KJA Bulletin. Anyone interested in placing an ad should contact Fred Lichaa (415) 341-4725, home. Do a mitzvah for the Karaite's community and help your business at the same time -- place an ad.

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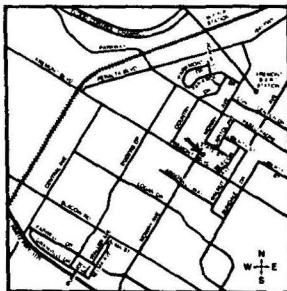
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A MODERN KARAITE-ARABIC POET: MOURAD FARAG

By LEON NEMOY, Dropsie University

THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE AGES the art of versification was regarded as an essential ingredient of an educated person's intellectual equipment. It was recognized that only a few individuals were blessed with genuine poetic talent which enabled them to produce an entire corpus of original poetic works, exhibiting a wealth of lofty (or not so lofty) ideas and images, as well as an abundance of stylistic brilliance. Nevertheless even those individuals who were not so blessed, but who aspired to be counted among the intellectual elite, were expected to be well enough versed in the canons of prosody and versification to produce, on more or less short notice, a brief poem to mark a special occasion or a long ode in praise of a powerful and wealthy patron.

In medieval Europe this rule applied to versification in Latin. Among the Arabs the tradition of versifying went back to pre-Muhammadan times, and the preserved (because it was eventually written down) pre-Islamic poetry probably represents but a small fraction of the poetic production of many centuries, transmitted from one generation to another by word of mouth. The wealth of the Arabic language in vocabulary, idioms, and figures of speech made versification uncommonly easy even for poetasters entirely devoid of the divine spark of talent. Most poetic forms went back to hoary antiquity—the rise of Islam, the Arab conquests of the 7th-8th centuries, and the establishment of the vast Arab (later general Islamic) empire enriched Arab poetry with new subjects and new vistas, but the canons of poetic creativity remained for the most part the same.

As in other respects, so also in respect to versification the

Jews resident in the medieval Muslim empire were influenced by their environment, except that their chief effort was concentrated upon Hebrew verse, and the principal fruit of it is the splendid corpus of Hebrew poetry produced in Spain. No doubt much of it, authored by mere amateurs—there were, and could have been, only few poets of the caliber of Judah ha-Levi and Solomon ibn Gabirol—has been irretrievably lost. Karaite intellectuals, too, succumbed to this cultural influence of their environment, and here, too, most of their preserved poetical production was written in Hebrew.¹

Yet it is difficult to believe that none of the Rabbanite and Karaite literati—not even those of them who by virtue of their literary or scientific eminence or of their professional (e.g., medical) expertise had more or less free entry into Muslim governmental, scholarly, and social circles—had ever tried their hand at composing an Arabic *qaṣīdah* in praise of a royal or patrician patron, a short poem on the occasion of a betrothal, an elegy on the death of an honored friend, or an impromptu line or two of verse² on any subject that might

¹ Examples are abundant: Salmon ben Jeroham's (10th century) מלחמת ה' is written entirely in verse (whether the projected Arabic version of it was likewise planned to be versified—probably not—we do not know; cf. L. Nemoi, *Karaite Anthology*, New Haven, 1952, p. 70); Japheth ben Eli, the premier early Karaite Bible commentator (end of 10th century), wrote at least one Hebrew hymn (published by J. Mann, *Texts and Studies, II: Karaitica*, Philadelphia, 1935, pp. 31-32; English translation, *Karaite Anthology*, pp. 107-08); Sahl ben Maṣliah, his younger contemporary, was presumably the true author of the versified epistle ascribed to Japheth and prefixed to Sahl's polemical tract against Rabbanism (S. Pinsker, לקוטי קדמוניות, Vienna, 1860, II, 19-24; cf. Mann, pp. 26-28); a versified hymn (Pinsker, II, 31; *Karaite Anthology*, pp. 112-13) is included in that tract; Moses Dar'i (12th century?) was a prolific poet (*Karaite Anthology*, pp. 133-46); Moses ben Samuel of Damascus (14th century) was another prolific poet (Mann, pp. 201-55; *Karaite Anthology*, pp. 147-69). For prefatory poems contained in Karaite-Hebrew legal codes see, for example, Aaron the Younger ben Elijah (14th century), עין עזר, Eupatoria, 1866, fol. 2a, 128b; Elijah Bashyatchi (15th century), אדירת אליהו, Odessa, 1870, recto of 4th preliminary leaf, and at the beginning and end of individual chapters.

² For an Arabic three-liner (quoted by a contemporary Muslim

have come up in the course of a literary exchange by letter or orally, during a conversation or poetic contest in the audience chamber of the sovereign or in the drawing room of a high official or a wealthy financier or merchant.

In any case, the fact remains that Arabic verses by Jewish, Rabbanite or Karaite, authors are very scarce indeed, and entire *diwāns* even more so, literally as scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth, at least so far as I know. It is therefore very much worth while to find one Karaite-Arabic poet, albeit a quite modern one, whose output is voluminous enough and whose command of prosody and style is solid enough to stand comparison with the *diwāns* of Muslim poets.

Mourad Farag³ was born in 1867 in a Karaite family whose traditional occupation was goldsmithing. He was expected to continue in this line of work, but instead proceeded to educate himself in both Hebrew and Arabic studies as well as in jurisprudence, and eventually qualified as attorney-at-law (Arabic *muḥāmmī*). He distinguished himself in several prominent cases, including the successful defence before the Court of Appeals in Cairo of a Jew indicted in Port Said on the charge of ritual murder. He became legal counsel to the Karaite *bēt-dīn* in Cairo and to the then reigning khedive 'Abbās Ḥilmī, and won the friendship of the Rabbanite Chief Rabbi of Egypt, Hayyim Nahum.⁴ He died at an advanced age in 1955.

biographer) by the 13th century Rabbanite ophthalmologist, philosopher, and theologian Ibn Kamūnah, see my note in *REJ*, CXXIII (1964), 508, 510. A fashionable physician in the imperial capital of Baghdad, he undoubtedly had entrée to the assemblies of Muslim high officialdom and aristocracy, not to speak of scholarly circles, and this three-liner is no doubt but one of many poetical essays from his pen, now lost or hopefully yet to be discovered (see p. 209).

³ This is his own transcription of his name, in the French fashion and according to the hard (g) Egyptian pronunciation of the letter *jīm* (j); the more exact spelling is Murād Faraj. See my paper "Mourad Farag and his book *The Karaites and the Rabbanites*," *REJ*, CXXV (1976), 87-112.

⁴ The second volume (Cairo, 1936) of his massive comparative Arabic and Hebrew etymological dictionary *Multaqā al-lughatayn* is dedicated to Chief Rabbi (*al-ḥabir al-akbar*) Nahum in these words:

Busy though he was as lawyer and as a prominent member of the Cairene Karaite community, Farag managed to find sufficient time to produce a long series of scholarly works, all in Arabic. Some dealt with modern Egyptian law, but most of them were devoted to Biblical exegesis, Karaite law, Hebrew grammar, comparative Arabic-Hebrew philology, and kindred subjects. Fortunately he also found the means to publish them. He also published four volumes of his Arabic poetry and two volumes of his Hebrew poems. His poetic output in both languages is thus very substantial indeed, and I suppose suggests that he possessed at least a spark of genuine poetic inspiration, as well as a strong urge to express his thoughts and feelings in the measured and stately tones of Arabic verse.

The following specimens of his Arabic poetry have been selected from the second and third volumes of Farag's *diwān*.⁵ I have deliberately narrowed the selection to short pieces, since longer *qaṣīdahs* by any Arab poet, however pleasing they may be in their original Arabic, are apt to become, when turned into a European language, somewhat too heavy (if not boring) for the Western reader. But even such shorter specimens are, I think, sufficient to give us a fair idea of Farag as poet, thinker, and master of Arabic verse.

"... I present to you this book of mine in the same way as I had previously presented to you my book *The Jewish Arab Poets (al-Shu'arā' al-Yahūd al-'Arab)*, Cairo, 1928)." The friendship between Farag and the Chief Rabbi must thus have been of long standing.

⁵ *Diwān Murād*, volumes II-III (the only ones that are before me), Cairo, 1924-29, 89 and 144 pages, comprising 287 pieces. I have had so far no opportunity to examine the two volumes of Farag's Hebrew poetry. Most of his works seem to have been published in rather small editions and went fairly quickly out of print. Probably few copies of them, if any, are at present available in American university libraries.

Mankind has (long) disagreed about his (the Messiah's) career,
 And they still continue in their disagreement.
 The Christians say he has already come to us,
 While the Jews still await him.
 The Christians say the Jews had put him
 To death by crucifixion, while the Muslims deny it.⁸
 O miracles from heaven, pray surprise the servants (of God) ⁹
 by revealing to them the truth!

I think patience is the ultimate (virtue) in every thing,
 And beyond patient endurance there is no (other) remedy.
 For if thou wilt not choose to endure patiently under stress,
 How wilt thou be (feeling) at the moment of relief? ¹²

Had God (chosen to) have only one religion, this would have
 condemned ⁷
 Enmity and contention among men.
 He did not, however, wish (to have it so); hence mankind is
 (as if) asleep,
 (Unaware) of brotherhood, of a life of amity and humanity.

One day I weighed her (the earth's) mountains against
 patience,¹¹
 And lo, patience proved weightier on the scales.
 I said, "But who can endure in bearing thee?"
 She replied, "Bearing me will be easy for thee if thou wouldst
 but understand." ¹²

I have been a victim of envy—O how evil was what
 I have encountered in the way of envy!
 It is as if what met their eyes ¹⁵
 Of others than I (seemed to them) like the brilliance of the
 sun to him who is sore-eyed.
 They used to say, "Wealth has come to him,
 "Prior to his prosperity he was empty-handed."
 If any favor has been bestowed upon me, it came from
 Him who breathes life into arid and desolate wasteland.
 (I earned my prosperity) by knowledge, godliness, and
 striving for excellence,
 And by considering my tomorrow before my today.¹⁶
 I put my faith in God most High, who
 Has impressed upon ¹⁷ my soul the might of (His)
 sovereignty.

My ¹⁴ homeland is Egypt. She is my birthplace,
 In her was I brought up, and in her was I educated.
 She is my mistress and the source of my livelihood.
 She is my abode—in her I come awake and spend the night
 (in sleep).
 I have no other refuge, and the gift
 Of (my) gratitude is (owed) to her, according as I have been
 favored (by her gifts) in her.
 May she live free, even though I have been enslaved
 By the intensity of my love for her independence.

This bride,²³ her age
 Had barely reached adolescence.
 She died (clad) in her wedding gown,
 Having worn it but one night over the dust (of the earth) ²⁴
 Yet she was called to His (God's)
 Grace—how gracious a place (to be called to)!
 O Miriam! Thou wilt always
 Receive a message of greeting from us.
 It is only for (thy) body, not for our hearts,
 That thy grave bids farewell to (thy) return.²⁵

I passed by a beautiful woman (resting) in the charnel vault
of her tomb,
And I said (to her), "Show me (thy) beauty, O comely lady."
She replied, "Maggots have fed on me, and dust has sucked
on me,
"Until the stench emitted by me has become unbearable."
I said, "May my soul be ransom for thy (beautiful) eyes!"
She sobbed
And replied, "How many souls have offered to be ransom for
me! Yet they availed not.
"Many lovers have been enticed by my charms,
"My glance bewitched them, and my wink enthralled them.
"Now I am dead, and they too are dead; beauty and passion
are gone,
"And we (all) have become (dry) bones—we neither tear down
nor build."

If some day I wish that I may go on living,
It is only because I long in this world for goodness and
knowledge.
Were it not for them, I would not be content to continue
living for a single moment;
Indeed I would be convinced that I have been made thereby
a victim of grievous injustice.

A few summary remarks on Farag's Arabic poetry will be sufficient here. In general he has remained faithful to the canons of the classical Arabic *ars poetica* and has not succumbed, as did more recent Arab poets, to the lure of Western free verse. His meters are all classical, his language is relatively free of modernisms, and even his themes are mostly those of classical poetry: the mutual intolerance of religious faiths, the virtue of patience and steadfastness against despair, the viciousness of envy and the malice of hypocrites, the tragedy of youth overtaken by untimely death, the perfidy of women, the inevitability and finality of death. Where a Muslim poet would sing the praises of the Arab Prophet, Farag finds Biblical persons and events to sing of: the tragic figure of the aged King David, who mourns for his son Absalom despite the fact that the latter, in his lust for power, had sought to slay his own father; or the enormity of Cain's fratricide, the first murder on earth and the harbinger of man's unnatural thirst for the blood of his own kind. Occasionally Farag touches a modern and personal theme, as when he asserts his loyalty to his native land of Egypt, in answer to an inquirer who presumably questioned his patriotism, if not that of all non-Muslim citizens.

In any case, Farag's poetical output is surely a valuable addition to the rather scanty (compared with Rabbanite poetry) known corpus of Karaite poetic literature in general, and Karaite-Arabic poetry in particular.

Addendum to Note 2

Joshua Blau (*The Emergence and Linguistic Background of Judaeo-Arabic*, Oxford, 1965, pp. 22ff., 36ff.) suggests that Jewish literati did not know enough classical Arabic to write original Arabic poetry in the classical tradition (yet Ibn Kammūnah did know and did write!). Nehemiah Allony (*Meir Wallenstein Anniversary Volume*, Jerusalem, 1979, pp. 80ff.) sees in their close adherence to Hebrew versification the influence of the Shu'ūbiyah movement, which advocated the defense and propagation of the native languages and cultures of the conquered populations (particularly the Persians) against the pressure to replace them with the Arabic language and Arab ideology.